How Can I Be Prepared for a COVID-19 Outbreak?

What is the current state of COVID-19?

- COVID-19 is a new respiratory virus. There are no treatments for it. Most people will recover on their own, but some people may develop pneumonia and require medical care or hospitalization.

- In Washington state, many people have tested positive for COVID-19 and unfortunately, several have died. Check www.doh.wa.gov/coronavirus for the latest case count.

- This is an international outbreak affecting several countries. It is very likely that COVID-19 will spread in parts of the United States, including Washington state.

- If COVID-19 spreads in Washington state, your life may be disrupted in a variety of ways. Keep yourself and household healthy by being prepared.

- As new information emerges from across the globe, please remember that the risk of COVID-19 is not at all connected with race, ethnicity or nationality. Stigma will not help to fight the illness. Seeking and sharing accurate information during a time of heightened concern is one of the best things we can do to keep rumors and misinformation from spreading.

How can I prevent the spread of COVID-19?

- Prevention starts with practicing good personal health habits: stay home when you're sick, cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue, wash your hands often with soap and water, and clean frequently touched surfaces and objects.

- Masks are not recommended for wear by the general public.

- Like other diseases, getting plenty of rest, drinking fluids, eating healthy foods, and managing your stress may help you prevent getting COVID-19 and recovering from it if you do.

- Symptoms of COVID-19 primarily include fever, cough, and shortness of breath. These symptoms appear 2 to 14 days after exposure.

- COVID-19 spreads between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet) via coughs or sneezes. It may also spread by touching a surface or object with the virus on it. Viruses typically do not survive on surfaces for an extended time.

- People are thought to be most contagious when they are the sickest, though some spread is possible before people show symptoms.

How do I plan ahead for COVID-19?

- Make an emergency plan of action with your household members, relatives, and friends. Visit Emergency Preparedness and You (on the CDC website) for more information.

- If the disease starts spreading more widely in your area, health officials might recommend to close schools or cancel events and encourage people to work remotely to slow the spread of the disease.

- Make plans for alternative arrangements for your child or yourself in the case of a school or university dismissal or shutdown. Also make plans for your elders and your pets, as needed.

- Check in with your work about your sick leave and telework options should you need to stay home to care for a household member.

- Make a list of your emergency contacts—family, friends, neighbors, carpool drivers, health care providers, teachers, employers, local public health department, and community resources.

- Gather extra supplies, such as soap, tissues, and alcohol-based hand sanitizer. If you or one of your household members have a chronic condition and regularly take prescription drugs, talk to your health provider, pharmacist, and insurance provider about keeping an emergency supply of medications at home.

What do I do if COVID-19 starts spreading in my community?

- Stay informed about local COVID-19 activity through the Department of Health website: doh.wa.gov/coronavirus and be aware of any signs that people in your community are getting sick. For example, watch for school dismissals or closures.

- Avoid contact with people who are sick. Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue, and wash your hands often with soap or water. Don't share personal items and clean frequently touched surfaces with soap and water.

- If you are sick, stay home. When seeking medical care, wear a facemask and keep your distance from others. If someone in your house is sick, stay home to avoid unknowingly spreading the virus to others.

- Do not attend large events, such as sporting events, conferences, or other community events if you are sick, do not feel well, or someone in your home is sick. If you aren't sick, consider your risk of getting COVID-19 at the event before you go.

- Discourage your children from gathering with others after school unless it is a small group. If any of the children show symptoms of COVID-19, separate them from others immediately.

- Watch your children for symptoms of COVID-19. Notify your children's child care facility or school if they are sick and get any classroom assignments or activities they can do from home.

- Set up a separate room for sick household members. Clean the room regularly. Do not interact with them more than necessary.

- Check in with family and friends who live alone—especially those with chronic diseases. If you live alone, ask your friends and family to check in with you if you become sick.